An Ode to Hand-Me-Down Xboxes

Community CamicaziBoss Nov 22, 2022

Ever wonder what your consoles might be thinking or feeling? This creative narrative weaves the experiences of one gamer's Xboxes through time. Story by Community Champion – CamicaziBoss.

#1: The Green 360

Destined for a collection, I was taken home to the lap of luxury. I had my very own shelf to rest on, another shelf for my games, and a third for my controllers. I was a beautiful special-edition console: Spartan green with black and gold accents. Even now, almost 15 years later, I hold value for collectors. My owner's kids could use me, but not with my matching controllers. The risk of damage was too high, and I was too perfect. The plan was to maintain my condition while still enjoying my functions, but things rarely go to plan.

Xbox 360 – Halo 3 Edition

Your mom left, and your dad was my owner’s close friend. The value of friendship outweighed my collecting value, I suppose, and I was sent away on a long-term loan. My single purpose? Keep your dad from getting too lonely when your mom had all the kids. Dad had stayed in the house, and you wanted to stay as well. You and your brothers were elated – Mom would never let you play games with guns, but you were with Dad, and he said it was okay. I stayed with your dad through a year of separation, and when your mom came home, she brought another Xbox with her.

We both were used for hours on end. Blankets were taped across the TV so you and your brothers couldn’t screen-cheat while playing Slayer. A beanbag was brought in so you could snuggle and watch movies. Together, we two Xboxes played DVDs, streamed video, and ran game after game after game.

After your parents' failed reconciliation and eventual divorce, you turned to us for comfort. I went with Dad, and the White 360 stayed with Mom, but that was okay. The games went back and forth with the kids. But eventually, new consoles moved in. Kids moved out. You left. Nearly ten years after I was first loaned to your dad, I found my way back to that first owner. I wasn't nearly as pretty (or functional) as before, but he took me back anyway.

#2: The White 360

When my box was first opened, it wasn't quite what I expected. I had been imagining a family, excited about their new console. Instead, it was the tired director of a family shelter who unboxed me. I was a donation, meant to help kids who needed a safe place feel more secure, and I had a job beyond just entertainment. I helped those kids escape, if only temporarily, from the terrifying things they were facing. I was loved in the form of sticky hands clutching my controllers and the loud sounds of innocent joy. The adults used me to teach kids to share, work as a team, and have fun. It was a worthy first life.

I first met you when your mom was working at the center. "But all my friends have an Xbox!" was the often-voiced argument from your brothers. It fell on deaf ears; your mom didn't like video games, and your dad didn't want to spend the money to buy an Xbox. "You already have enough video games at home," they would say. There were video games at home, but not Halo or Call of Duty – both of which your brothers had tasted on your uncle's Xbox. They wanted more.

I had never played Halo or Call of Duty, for I was relegated to party and adventure games in the center. "The less violence in these kids' lives, the better," said the staff. I didn't run a game with a rating higher than E until almost a year later, when I was no longer needed at the center. Your parents had split. Your mom blamed your reluctance to stay with her on the Green Xbox and decided to get one of her own. I was already retired – replaced by a console with motion controls – and sat collecting dust on the shelf. The director, who had unboxed me years ago, let her take me home.

You had two Xboxes now. The Green 360 and I took turns keeping you and your brothers entertained at our respective homes for about a year. Then, we were brought together when your parents decided to "try to make it work one more time." Sadly, it wasn't meant to be, and the Green 360 left with your dad while I stayed behind. You fell in love with me, I think. Sure, you had a lot of fun with your brothers on the Green 360, but it was I who kindled your love of Skyrim. In the process, you began to see yourself as an Xbox gamer, and I was the first Xbox you called your own (even though I was really the family's Xbox).

Xbox 360 – The Red Ring

I lived for another 5 years after the divorce, but I declined until I eventually fell victim to the Red Ring of Death. It was okay, though – I'd had a long, satisfying life. I was loved, and my last act was to sacrifice myself in exchange for the pure joy a preteen boy gets when smashing old electronics.

#3: The Black One

I had a life before you, I'm sure, but I don't remember what it was like. Your mom ordered me refurbished from a retailer that took me in when my first home didn't need me anymore. The White 360 was very tired by then, with waning functionality and difficulties playing with your newfound online friends. I was its replacement and your graduation gift. The White 360 hadn't given up yet, and wouldn't for two more years, but you were ready to move on.

Together, we entered the world of online gaming. You had dabbled a bit on the two 360s, but everyone you were playing with already had an Xbox One. Gameplay worked fine, but party chat was awkward at best and nonexistent at worst. I was a welcome change. For the first time, you truly became a social gamer, and I'm glad to know I had a hand in that.

In the process, I watched you go through a lot. The most difficult thing in your life happened shortly before I entered it, and you held onto me as if your life depended on it. Maybe I was your way out. You didn't work that summer, even with the university looming on the horizon. You shut yourself away from nearly everyone, but I was there. Your online friends were there. Somehow, you dragged yourself to college. You finally got the help you needed. Even though it was hard and scary, you made it through that first year and started to heal.

My only regret is that I didn't make it with you. It was springtime, and you were almost ready to go home after your first year of college. I started

disappointing you – crashing, shutting down, failing to start. Your mom, in her wisdom, had purchased the warranty. You took me back to the retailer, and they explained my fatal failures were known to occasionally happen in consoles like me. That was it. With my warranty, I could be replaced at no cost. You said goodbye, not knowing if I would be refurbished again or discarded. You would never know.

#4: The One S

Xbox One S

I was new – not refurbished, not “like new,” new. I came in my original packaging. The retailer was bound to honor the warranty, but they didn’t have any used consoles in stock. Rather than order one or send you to another store, the clerk offered to give me to you. “It’s technically allowed,” he said. You wanted to keep the controller that had come with the Black One, and the retailer let you in exchange for my white one. “That is also technically allowed,” he said. You didn’t mind giving the new one up. The Elite Controller was better anyway.

We went through your second year of college together. I helped keep the stress down because your classes were hard, and you needed the relief. I was taken to other campus housing areas from time to time for movie and game nights. You broke your ankle the previous winter, and it was during my tenure that you finally went to the doctor for surgery. We had a lot of hours together when you couldn’t walk, including some panic when I was knocked off a shelf and dangled by my HDMI cord! It wasn’t long after your recovery

that you joined the Xbox Ambassadors. The White 360 and the Black One started you on your path, but I was the one who brought you into your own as a gamer.

You became more confident as both a gamer and as a person, learning how to love others and yourself on- and offline. You established your own gaming community and gained a positive reputation among the Ambassadors, so much so that you were selected as a Community Champion at the end of 2020. You graduated and received your degree, despite your parents' concerns that I would be a distraction. I traveled with you on your long visits to your now-fiancé's home thousands of miles away, played side-by-side with the Xbox One S you convinced him to buy, and made the trip back home.

We had four wonderful years together, but it's over now. Your fiancé insisted on new consoles, which you strongly opposed. "Mine still works," you insisted in defense of me. His response? "It doesn't work when two of the three USB ports aren't functional." He was right, you know. I'll miss you, but we'll still be in touch. After all, you gave the other One S and me to your youngest brother. Now he can have an Xbox at both parents' houses instead of carrying his old One back and forth.

#5: The Series X

At the time of writing, I'm still installing all your games. I am not a hand-me-down, refurbished console, or warranty replacement. I am a brand-new, current generation console – your very first one.

We've just barely met, but I'm excited to see where we go.

Series X

A Note from CamicaziBoss

One of the best ways to “recycle” a console is to find a new home. Many Xboxes are retired with minor, repairable defects. If you have recently upgraded or are planning to upgrade soon, consider giving your old console a new life. If it still works, give it to a friend or relative who might appreciate it – that’s how I got my first consoles – or find somewhere that will accept it. Many charity organizations, such as Gamers Outreach and StackUp, accept consoles as donations.